The Contracting and Acquisition Management Development Program

The greatest threats to the Army's acquisition community do not currently lie on the battlefield. Recent demographic shifts (an aging and diminishing workforce population) are presenting unique financial and staffing challenges to the acquisition workforce. Only through an aggressive management recruiting effort can the acquisition community ensure its continued contribution to the Army's transformation. This article addresses one of these efforts.

The Contracting and Acquisition Management Development Program (MDP) is a career development initiative geared primarily for college students who are considering a challenging career in the Army's contracting and acquisition career fields. Implemented in October 2002, the MDP offers motivated, goal-oriented participants a healthy mix of formal classroom instruction as well as on-the-job and rotational training. The ultimate goal of the MDP is to ensure that the acquisition community continues to employ the best and brightest minds available today and well into the future.

The program offers college-level trainees a 36-month training experience with noncompetitive promotions for the first 2 years, nationwide placement, rapid advancement, career mobility, and a wide selection of professional development opportunities. The MDP is composed of four specialized training components: formal instruction, on-the-job training, rotational cross training, and informal in-house training.

Formal instruction provides a solid background in the current methods, processes, and regulations involved in contracting and acquisition. On-the-job training involves assigning each candidate an experienced instructor who will serve as a professional development mentor and information resource. This segment of the training familiarizes the trainee with the daily duties and responsibilities of a contract specialist and prepares candidates for a smooth integration into the acquisition workforce.

Broadening and networking opportunities are provided through rotational cross training. As the trainee transitions through branches within the organization, he or she will experience firsthand the vital role that these areas play in accomplishing mission-critical tasks. Trainees can also elect to rotate through one of their particular center's customer activities. Informal in-house training provides the fundamentals on the underlying principles and operations of contract support.

The final year of the program involves a 4- to 6-month developmental assignment with the Defense Contract Management Agency at a local contract management office. The final segment of training is a "greening" opportunity to give participants a basic understanding of who the ultimate customers are, their programs, and their operational environment.

Recruits enter federal service as full-time employees at the GS-7 level (or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level) and are noncompetitively promoted every year until they reach their target grades, up to a GS-12. Competition for higher grades will be offered later during the candidate's federal career.

Requirements for incoming trainees include U.S. citizenship, a security clearance, a baccalaureate degree with a 2.95 GPA or better, and at least 24 credit hours of business education. Trainees must also be registered with the Selective Service and sign a mobility agreement. The North Central Civilian Personnel Operations Center in Rock Island, IL, is responsible for centralized recruitment related to the MDP. More information on the Contracting and Management Development Program can be found at **http://asc.rdaisa.army.mil/CP_14/opportunities/opportunities.html**, or by contacting Jennifer Schafer at (309) 782-7299, **jennifer.schafer@cpocria.army.mil**.

NEWS BRIEFS

Patents Awarded For Active Topical Skin Protectant

Dr. Ernest H. Braue Jr. and CPT Stephen T. Hobson of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense (USAMRICD) and their collaborators were recently awarded seven patents. Their research resulted in a barrier cream that can not only prevent chemical warfare agents from being absorbed into the skin, but also neutralize these agents into less toxic products (i.e., serve as a reactive matrix). A patent was awarded for each type of material that was shown to be an effective reactive matrix. Three more patent applications on active topical skin protectant formulations are still under consideration by the U.S. Government Patent and Trademark Office.

This research effort continues studies initiated in the 1980s to develop a topical barrier cream to augment the protective overgarments and/or redefine the circumstances requiring mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) levels. Transitioned to the production, fielding, deployment and operational support phase of development in 2000, this topical barrier cream, now called Skin Exposure Reduction Paste Against Chemical Warfare Agents (SERPACWA), will be available to warfighters in 2003.

For additional information on this effort, contact Cindy Kronman at (410) 436-1866.

New Fire Protection Garments For Soldiers

Nomex coveralls sent to a group of combat support soldiers participating in Operation Enduring Freedom could be the beginning of affordable flash-flame protection for all soldiers. Seventeen sets of the disposable garments were sent from the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center in Natick, MA, in response to a request that included flame-resistant clothing. The sage green, commercially available coveralls were selected because of their ability to reduce burns from 88 to 8 percent at a 3-second exposure on an instrumented mannequin when worn over a battle dress uniform (BDU), T-shirt, and briefs.

"The problem is that soldiers are going to be at risk of burns from accidental flash fires because they don't have the right clothing," said Carole Winterhalter, a Textile Technologist with the Individual Protection Directorate, who responded to the request. Furthermore, the coveralls cost $25 a set. Fitted over a regular BDU, the cost totals about $80 versus $180 for a Nomex aircrew BDU. Soft, lightweight, and air-permeable, the coveralls are made from a blend of 92 percent Nomex, 5 percent Kevlar (both flame-resistant fibers developed by DuPont), and 3 percent nylon. Cost savings result from the nonwoven material's direct fiber-to-fabric manufacturing. Another cost saving is a simple garment design with no cuffs and minimum stitching. Army aviators and tank crew members are the only servicemembers authorized to wear flame-resistant clothing, which is made mostly from woven Nomex fabric. The fiber chars instead of melts and gives durable flame protection for the life of the garment. Although flame-resistant and well-liked, Winterhalter said it is too expensive to issue to every ground soldier.

The coveralls now supporting the soldiers were designed for industry. Not intended for fire fighting, they passed National Fire Protection Association standards for industrial workwear when independently tested by the Underwriters Laboratory. Winterhalter said that the garment is limited-wear with low-abrasion resistance and prone to pilling. For an industrial worker, it may last 10-12 washings before being disposed. "We're hoping to get feedback from the soldiers and use it in conjunction with an ongoing development effort to come up with a military-specific version," Winterhalter added.

The military version will have a camouflage pattern, openings for access to BDUs, sizing that fits the military population, and oil and water repellency that may also reduce pilling and enhance durability. Even when worn over the BDU and at double the cost, Winterhalter said the system would be 40 percent less expensive than existing flame-protective clothing. That would meet the team's final objective of developing a flame-protective clothing system that is 30-50 percent less expensive than existing Nomex-based systems.

The Army Soldier Systems Center is part of the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM). For more information about SBCCOM or the center, please visit our Web site at **http://www.sbccom.army.mil**.

PDAs Find A Place In Military Medicine

When hand-held personal digital assistants (PDAs) hit the market in the late 1990s, the Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC) at Fort Detrick, MD, immediately started exploring how clinicians could use them, both on the battlefield and in military treatment facilities. Medical PDAs—called MDAs at TATRC—can improve medical record keeping, give providers instant access to medical information and patient histories, alert providers of lab results, speed up the flow of patient information among providers and commanders, and shorten the time first responders spend on the battlefield filling out forms.

Additionally, MDAs exploit the already powerful capabilities PDAs offer. Scheduling, storing contact information, creating to-do lists, writing personal memos, accessing e-mail, and collecting data are all routine tasks for business PDAs.

Future Medical Shelter System

During the past year, program managers at the U.S. Army Medical Materiel Development Activity have been working with the Army Medical Command Center and School at Fort Sam Houston, TX, to move the service away from its current deployable medical systems shelters to ones that are easier to deploy.

The Army's future medical shelters must meet specific parameters before a C-130 loadmaster will ever strap them down and send them to a deployment. They must require fewer flights and promise lighter loads for the airlifter.

The new shelters are envisioned as a leap forward in shelter technology for fielding a next-generation forward surgical team shelter or a combat support hospital with operating room capability.

What developers of the combat support hospital shelter hope to produce is a surgical shelter with a complete operating room outfitted with two surgical tables, medical equipment, and a patient holding area—all in one container.

A second shelter, intended for use far forward in combat zones, will also be studied in 2003. Mobile Medical International Corp. will develop a "surgical suite in a box." Though it won't be as sophisticatedly equipped as the combat support hospital shelter, it will be ready for medical personnel to see patients in minutes and will have the added features of environmental control and power generation systems.

One-Handed Tourniquet

When a wounded soldier, far from a buddy or medic, needs to put a tourniquet on a severely injured arm or leg, simpler is better. With this in mind, 3 years ago a research and development effort among three U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command organizations set out to create a tourniquet that a wounded soldier could use with one hand to replace the two-handed one currently issued.

Today, 4,000 of the resultant products are on their way to Army Special Forces soldiers at Fort Bragg, NC, for user evaluation. With a cinch-type device made of nylon webbing, plastic "D" rings that lock, a small but sturdy piece of elastic, and a couple of strips of Velcro, the tourniquet looks simple because it is simple.

Second Generation FLIRS Fielded To Soldiers

On Sept. 25, 2002, soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, received their brand new M1A2SEP tanks from the Team Armor partnership at west Fort Hood, TX. The integral part of the Army's newest tank is the 1,000th production unit of the Army's newest Second Generation Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR). Present at the fielding were manufacturing plant technicians from both DRS Technologies and Raytheon—the two prime contractors for the Second Generation FLIR System. It was an exciting experience for the technicians to meet the soldiers who operate their product and to see the fruits of their labors in an operational environment.

The Second Generation FLIR allows gunners to see more clearly and at greater ranges. In the configuration on the Abrams M1A2SEP tank, the Second Generation FLIR enables the crew to have "hunter-killer" capabilities, which allows the gunner to engage targets in one direction while the tank commander is simultaneously looking in all other directions.

The Office of the Product Manager, FLIR is responsible for the Army's ground-based FLIRs. PM, FLIR is part of the Office of the Project Manager, Night Vision/ Reconnaissance Surveillance Target Acquisition (PM, NV/RSTA) at Fort Belvoir, VA, which falls under the cognizance of the Program Executive Office, Intelligence, Electronic Warfare and Sensors, at Fort Monmouth, NJ.

Through horizontal technology integration, the electro-optical components that make up the Second Generation FLIR are the same as those used in the target acquisition systems for four key weapons platforms: the M1A2SEP Abrams tank, the M2A3/M3A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the Line-of-Sight Anti-Tank platform, and the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System, which is currently deployed in Kosovo and Afghanistan. This technology ensures combat overmatch for the combined arms team, while providing significant standoff for target detection, recognition, and identification and common situational awareness to the warfighter. Commonality of components enhances maintainability and supportability on the battlefield.

This team effort during the past several years represents not only the 1,000th Second Generation FLIR fielded, but it represents the thousands of members of the team (soldiers, government civilians, and contractors) who had an integral part in making this portion of battlefield dominance a reality.

Members of Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Hood; team members from PM, Abrams; Team Armor; PM, FLIR; PM NV/RSTA; and contractor personnel from DRS Technologies and Raytheon